

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

Approved by the White House,
6/23/61

DATE: June 4, 1961
Lunch
Soviet Embassy
Vienna

SUBJECT: Vienna Meeting Between The President
and Chairman Khrushchev.

PARTICIPANTS: Listed on Page 5.

COPIES TO: The White House-2
The Secretary
EUR - Mr. Kohler
Executive Secretariat-
Permanent Conference File

During lunch the following points of interest emerged:

1. Mr. Khrushchev said he had not had the good fortune of meeting Lenin.

2. Mr. Khrushchev referred to the obsolescence of naval surface ships such as cruisers and carriers. He said that the Soviet Union had switched to the production of submarines, particularly of submarines designed to combat other vessels. On the other hand, US submarines are designed to attack land masses. Of course, the USSR has such submarines too. Mr. Khrushchev then expressed the view that missiles are the God of War today and said that they had three types of missiles in production: short-range, medium-range, and inter-continental.

3. Mr. Khrushchev said he had heard that pressure was being brought to bear on the President to resume nuclear weapon tests. He said that he was under a similar pressure; however, the USSR will wait for the US to resume testing and if the US does resume the USSR will follow suit.

4. Mr. Khrushchev said he was placing certain restraints on projects for a flight to the moon. Such an operation is very

expensive

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expensive and this may weaken Soviet defenses. Of course, Soviet scientists want to go to the moon, but the US should go first because it is rich and then the Soviet Union will follow.

5. In response to the President's inquiry whether perhaps a cooperative effort could be made in that direction, Mr. Khrushchev said that cooperation in outer space would be impossible as long as there was no disarmament. The reason for this is that rockets are used for both military and scientific purposes. The President said that perhaps coordination in timing of such efforts could be achieved in order to save money. This would not involve Soviet rockets. Mr. Khrushchev replied that this might be possible but noted that so far there had been few practical uses of outer space launchings. The race was costly and was primarily for prestige purposes.

6. Mr. Khrushchev said that he had read the President's defense message and that in reading it he had thought that perhaps the USSR should also increase its land forces and artillery. The President observed that the US was not planning to increase its armed forces except for 12,000 Marines to bring three Marine Corps divisions up to full strength.

7. During a brief discussion of the Laotian situation, Mr. Gromyko said that the difference between the Secretary and himself was that Mr. Rusk wanted the ICC to be free to go to any point in the country. On the other hand, the Soviet view is that the purpose of the ICC is to verify the cease-fire and that, therefore, the ICC should be allowed to go only to points along the front line where clashes occur.

8/ In his toast to the President, Mr. Khrushchev said that he was very happy to meet the President and to be able to exchange views with him. He said he preferred as much as possible to have personal contacts. This is always better than to get through even the best possible Ambassadors. He quoted a joke that natural love is better than love through interpreters. He said that he always preferred contacts and did not like to evade crucial issues. If leaders of states cannot resolve the most complex problems between themselves, how can officials at a lower level accomplish that task. This is why he prefers personal meetings, where he can listen to the position of the other side and set forth his own. He said he had heard the President's position and had set forth his own. At this time, apparently no understanding has been reached between the two sides. However, if people could resolve all difficult questions in their first meeting, no difficult questions would exist. Noting that he was speaking on behalf of the Soviet Government and on behalf of the USSR's friends in the Warsaw Pact who are interested in a

peace

treaty with Germany, Mr. Khrushchev said that he wanted to stress that they are for peace. The President might agree or disagree with this, but, Mr. Khrushchev said, he wanted to assure the President that the USSR's motives are sincere. He wanted the President to understand that when the USSR undertook this action, it would not be directed against the US or its allies. The Soviet Union wants to remove the roadblocks that stand in the way. This is a painful process and it is similar to a surgical operation. However, the USSR wants to cross that bridge and it will cross it. Evidently US-USSR relations will sustain great tensions as a result of that but, Mr. Khrushchev said, he is sure that the clouds will dissipate, the sun will come out again and will shine brightly. The US does not want Berlin, neither does the Soviet Union. It is true that US prestige is involved in this matter, but the only party really interested in Berlin as such is Adenauer. He is an intelligent man but old. The Soviet Union cannot agree to having the old and moribund held back the young and vigorous. Strauss is the most aggressive-minded man in West Germany, but even a man like himself, whose mind is in the eclipse, can apparently see the light. On one occasion Strauss wisely admitted that he fully understood how greatly Germany would suffer in a new war and how complete its destruction would be. This was a very wise remark. So let us try to remove the seeds that engender conflicts. Mr. Khrushchev said that he understood the President's position was a difficult one; his allies may raise the question of why the US should be speaking on their behalf. However, the allies of the USSR feel the same and are jealous about their rights. Mr. Khrushchev said that he was sure that if a US ally like Luxembourg were to raise its voice, there would be no problem for the President. He said he did not wish to name some of his own allies who, if they were to raise a belligerent voice, would not frighten anyone. However, the situation would be quite different if our two countries were to clash. Mr. Khrushchev then raised his glass to the solution of these problems. The President is a religious man and would say that God should help us in this endeavor. For his part, Mr. Khrushchev said, he wanted common sense to help us find solutions to our problems.

9. In his reply, the President expressed his appreciation of this opportunity to meet the Chairman and said that the reason why he had been anxious to meet with him was that he felt that our two countries were strong and that our peoples wanted peace and continued progress toward a better life. He also felt that a meeting between the Chairman and himself would be in the interest of world relations generally. The President then said that while the talks had been wide-ranging, he appreciated the atmosphere in which they had taken place. As he had told Mr. Gromyko, his ambition was to prevent a direct confrontation between the US and the USSR in this era of evolution, the outcome of which we cannot foresee. Such a confrontation might endanger peace.

The President

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The President said he had never underestimated the power of the USSR and he knew Mr. Khrushchev also realized that the US was a strong country. Both have vast supplies of destructive weapons. In the past, it was possible to fight wars without necessarily causing a lasting effect, but the effects of a modern war would go from generation to generation. Therefore, the President continued, both he and the Chairman have the special obligation of carrying out their responsibilities toward their peoples and their national interests in a way not endangering all. In other words, there should be a basic understanding of basic and secondary questions. For instance, Germany and its future is extremely important because of its geographic location. Each side should recognize the interests and responsibilities of the other side.

The President expressed the hope that he would not leave this meeting in Vienna, a city that is symbolic of the possibility of finding equitable solutions, with a problem involving national security and reputation. Although in other days people with similar responsibilities failed, the President said, he hoped that he and the Chairman would be able to succeed. This goal can be achieved only if each is wise and stays in his own area. The President concluded by recalling that last night he had asked Mr. Khrushchev what position he had occupied at the age of 44. The Chairman had replied that he was head of the Moscow Planning Commission and was looking forward to becoming Chairman. As far as he was concerned, the President said, he hoped to become at the age of 67 head of the Boston Planning Commission and perhaps National Chairman of the Democratic Party. Mr. Khrushchev interjected that perhaps the President would like to become head of the Planning Commission of the whole world. The President said no, only of the city of Boston.

PARTICIPANTS:

United States

The President
The Secretary
Ambassador Matthews
Ambassador Thompson
Mr. Bundy
Ambassador Bohlen
EUR - Mr. Kohler
Mr. Nitze
Mr. Salinger
D - Mr. Amalovsky
(interpreting)

USSR

Chairman Khrushchev
Foreign Minister Gromyko
Ambassador Avilov, Ambassador to Austria
Ambassador Morshikov
Mr. Troyanovsky, Personal Assistant
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USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Kolochkov, Chief of Protocol,
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Mr. Zhuravlev, Chief, Press Division,
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